

Dear Chairman Rice and Committee Members,

I, Connie Reichelt, apologize for my inability to attend today's hearing. I appreciate the opportunity to address the importance of implementing Interstate Compact Licensure for Montana's nurses. This Bill, supported by the Montana Board of Nursing, will help propel nursing practice into the future.

I present to you, today, as a member of the Montana Board of Nursing, a Montana citizen and a Montana health care provider working in a truly rural environment. I am a family nurse practitioner working in Big Sandy, Montana. Many of my clients travel to warmer climates each winter. While away they still rely on me and my staff to provide them with quality healthcare. When one of these patients calls from another state for advice, information or prescription renewal, the registered nurse in my office is technically practicing beyond the borders of our great state. She is providing healthcare in the state the patient is currently residing. I am sure this is something many of you have not given much thought too, but for us it is a concern. Compact licensure will help provide a safety net for those nurses treating our residents who temporarily reside elsewhere.

As a citizen of the state, I cannot help but be concerned about how my health and welfare will be cared for should a terrorist attack or a natural disaster occur. All of us watched, on television sets, in horror when Hurricane Katrina struck the gulf coast. Many healthcare providers, primarily nurses, were turned away at the Louisiana border due to not having Louisiana licensure. As a Montana citizen, should forest fire, earthquake or flood destroy our homes, our livelihood and health, I would like to know additional healthcare providers would be welcomed in our state through the Interstate Compact Licensure agreement.

And finally, as a member of the Montana Board of Nursing, I have a duty to ensure competent and safe healthcare for our citizens. The Interstate Compact Licensure provides an excellent method for background checks on nurses applying for licensure. It allows the Board of Nursing to investigate any disciplinary action brought against a nurse's license or if the nurse has committed any crime that would endanger the welfare of our State's patients.

As you consider this bill for vote, please reflect on how this issue affects each of you personally. Healthcare is a subject that everyone must take seriously and that is why I beseech you to move this bill forward so the nursing profession can effectively meet the ever changing demands placed before it.

I thank each of you for your time and consideration and wish you all good health.

Sincerely,

Connie Reichelt, APRN, FNP